



ENGAGING & EMPOWERING RESIDENTS IN PSH WITH CREATIVE WRITING!

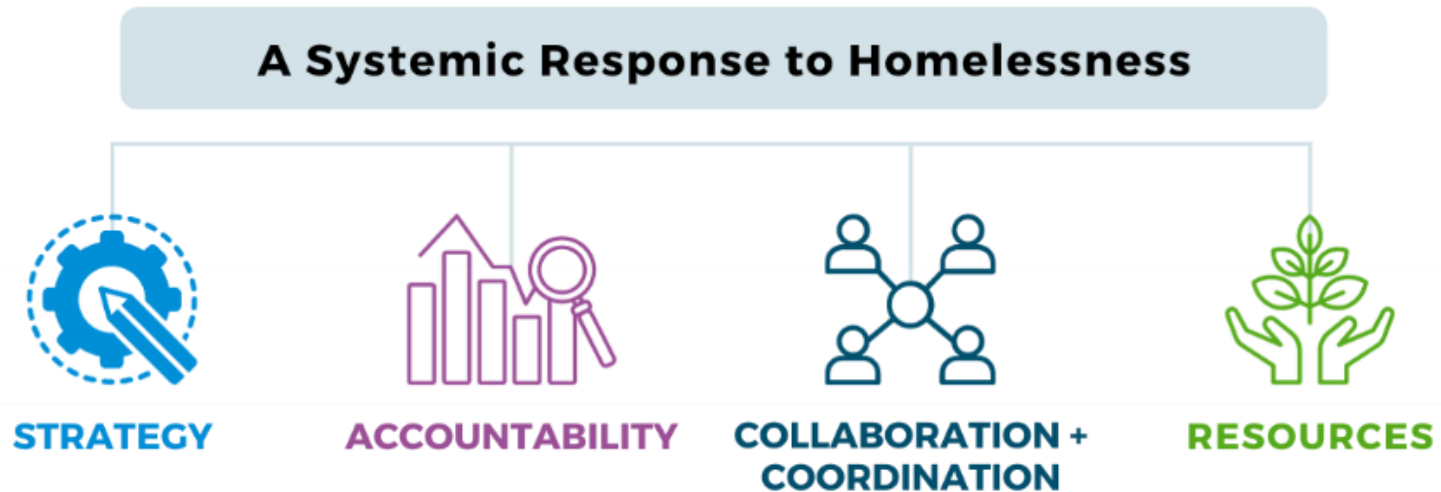
Housing First Partner's Conference, April 2024

Steve Skovensky



Mission

To lead a coordinated, community effort to make sure everyone has a place to call home in Columbus and Franklin County, Ohio.



Crisis Response System

PREVENTION & RAPID RESOLUTION

HOMELESS HOTLINE
614-274-7000



SHELTER



HOUSING

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING
temporary



PREVENTION & RAPID RESOLUTION



RAPID RE-HOUSING



PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING



STREET OUTREACH



DEMOGRAPHICS FROM FY23

7,865

people were served in
emergency shelters last
year.

1,910

were children.

43 average age

59% male | 40%
female | 1% other
gender

60% black | 32%
white | 6% multi-
race |
2% other race

5% were Veterans

58% have self-
reported disability

20% were working

\$589 average
monthly household
income

72% were homeless
for the first time

Permanent Supportive Housing

3,239 people were kept safely housed and healthy in permanent supportive housing, including 232 veterans.



Let's begin with a poem...

My past is slipping away.
My mom died 20 years ago.
My dad died a year and a half ago.
My last uncle died two weeks ago.
George Carlin died this week.
The universes are temporary
The only thing in this material
World that doesn't change—
Is the fact that everything changes
Whatever is born—dies.
I wish I didn't like it here so much.

Ronald Routh
Chicago, Illinois

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explore the benefits of Creative Writing for self-exploration and resiliency
- How to organize & implement your own Creative Writing Group in a PSH site (or emergency shelter)
 - Poetry & writing activities
- Examples of how to provide Clients with opportunities to share their work with the Community
 - Forming a small press
 - Engaging with community-based readings & events

Enough about me...

How many people here work in housing programs?

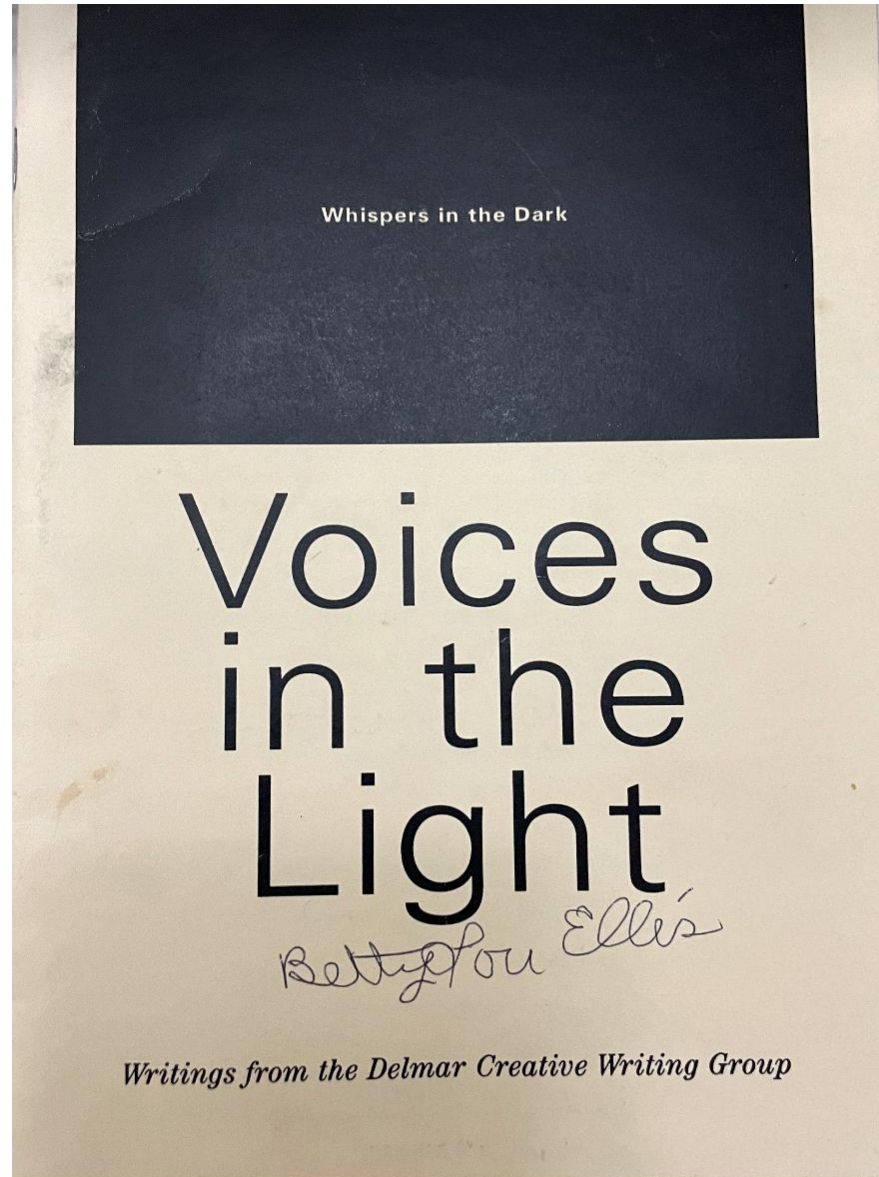
Have you implemented any writing or arts programming?

What has been your experience?

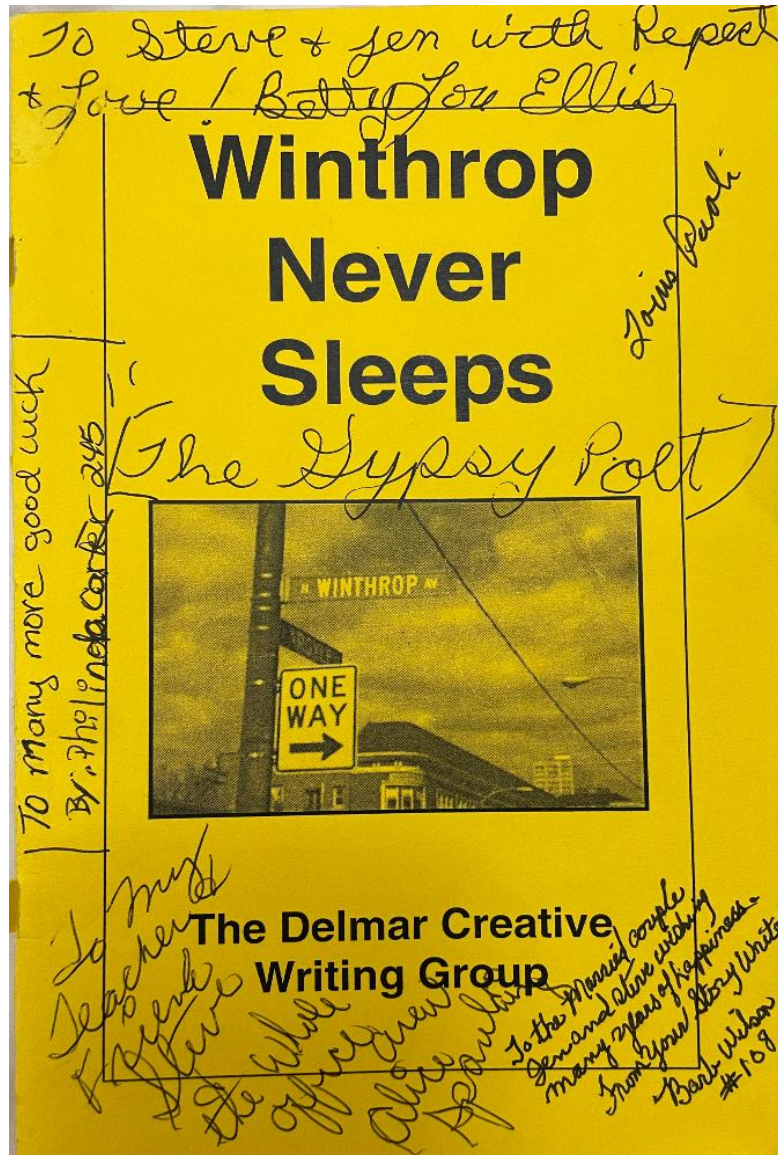
HISTORY & BACKGROUND

- BA in Family Studies, Masters in Non-Profit Management; writing has been a passion & interest
- Move to Chicago in 1999, worked for Lakefront SRO
 - Pioneer in PSH & Blended Management
- Formed Creative Writing Group in 2001 & created Delmar Press
- The group published over 25 books in 5 years
- Began going to local open-mics & readings

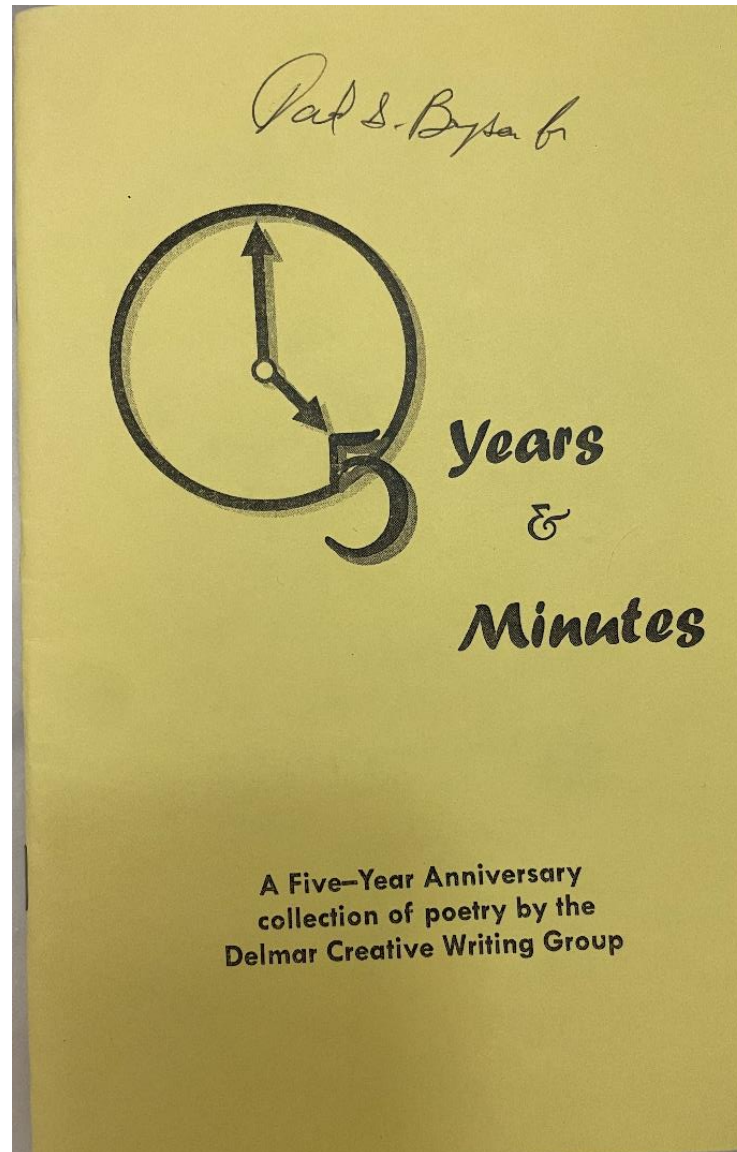
Whispers in the Dark, Voices in the Light (2001)



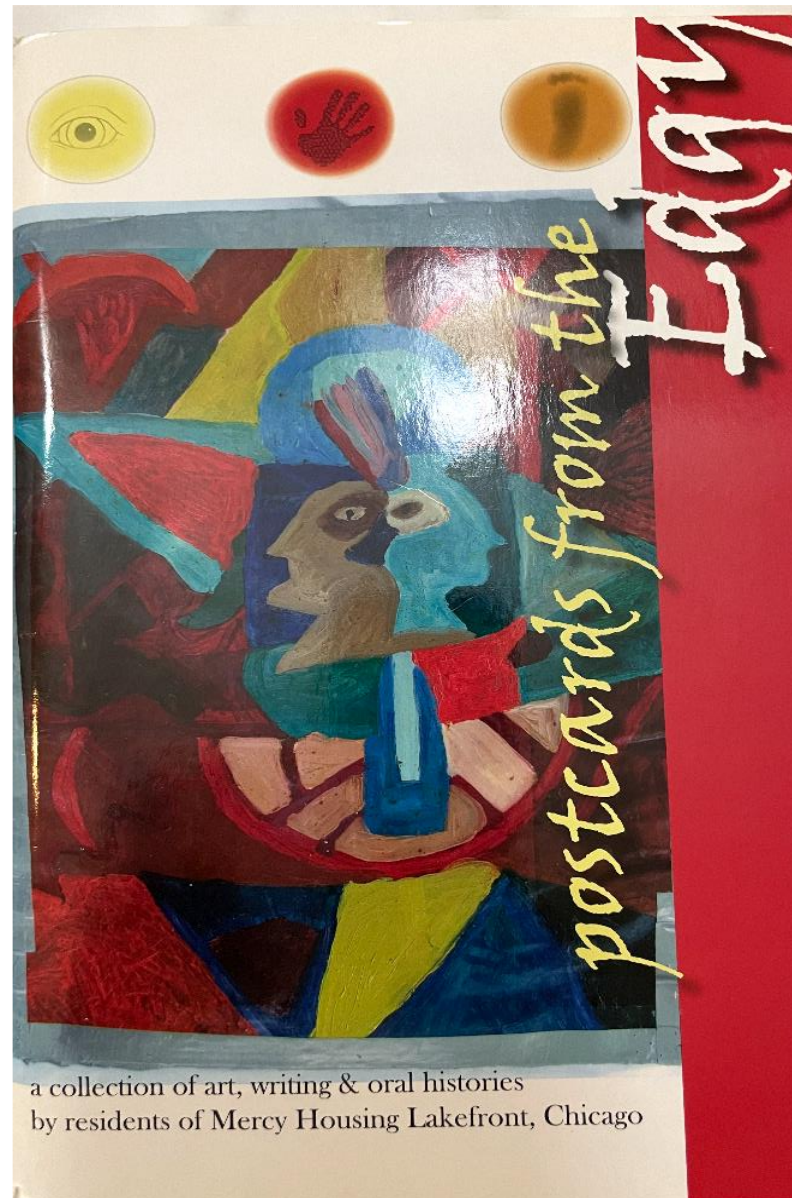
Winthrop Never Sleeps (2003)



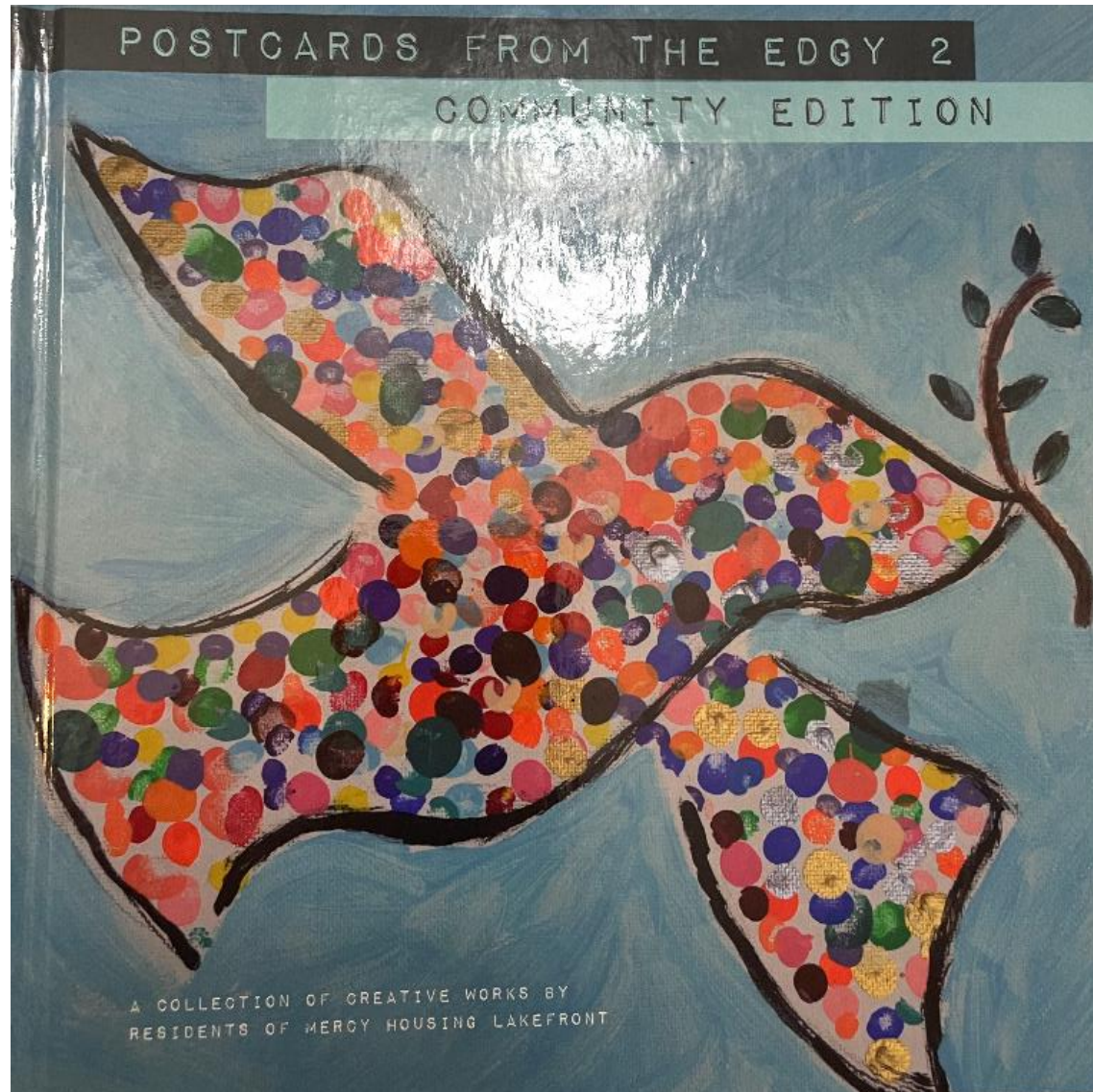
5 Years & 5 Minutes (2006)



Postcards from the Edgy (2009)



Postcards from the Edgy 2 (2014)



ANYONE CAN DO THIS!

Everyone is a philosopher.

*-The Journal of Ordinary
Thought*

Chicago



THE BENEFITS OF CREATIVE WRITING

- Enhancing confidence & coping skills
- Expressing feelings
- Creating community
- Identity (as a poet, a writer, a musician...)
- \$\$\$ for the Clients
 - Book releases and book sales, 'poetry-grams'

So how do you do this at your PSH site?

- Determine interest
- Find a few (or more) ambassadors
- Offer food (at first...)
- Determine the flow of the group
 - Writing activity & sharing
- Always make it a safe space-ground rules
- Have a plan-but don't be afraid to stray from it

Examples of writing activities or prompts...

- Topic-driven
 - Give several different topics & the participant chooses a topic (always end with 'or whatever is on your mind')
 - 5-7 minutes writing time
- Haiku & Limericks
- Group Poems
- What else? Whatever you want! Whatever the group wants!

TOPIC-DRIVEN WRITING ACTIVITY

1. Think of your favorite color. What does it make you feel? Tell us about it.
2. What do you see outside your window in your home? Tell us about it.
3. What season do you get most excited about? Do you have memories or events from your life when you think of that season? Tell us about it.
4. Write about anything that comes to mind right now. It could be about your feelings, something you have been thinking about...something that you would like to do.

Spend the next 5 minutes writing & then we can share

Yellow

Yellow makes me think
Of a Smokie Mountain creek
In the Springtime, as the wild flowers
Bloom!

The Ozark Mountains open to
The Plains States & Twister Alley.
Look out Mountain Folks,
They're looking for your still!

Betty Lou Ellis
The Gypsy Poet (Roma)
Chicago, Illinois

Untitled (Seasons activity)

From toes in sand
to feet on carpet.
An air-conditioned room
blocks off heat
from the outdoors.
I worshipped the beach
growing up. Now I haven't
even seen the lake from
afar in years.
The cold grasp of a
hospital stay made all the
separation happen; from
sun to florescent light.

JoAnn Egbert
Chicago, Illinois

Haikus

Develop a template to count out the syllables

_____ (5)

_____ (7)

_____ (5)

Haiku Examples

The star is the soul
The soul is the place of God
This is also the Ghost

Dorian Morningstar
Chicago, Illinois

After the storm, I
Feel better, I'm not in the
Rain. Clouds are leaving.

The Delmar Creative Writing Group
Chicago, Illinois

Getting into the Community

- Find local open-mic nights & poetry readings
- Tap into the arts & writing scene
- Book release events & on-site readings
- Let this become a way for Clients to make \$
- It can become Client-directed
- Work with your Communications & Fundraising Team

Lucky Patrick (For Patrick Breen)

When I think of you
I think of sunny days & pretty flowers
I think of lottery tickets
& summer hours.
I think of a veteran
Against unjust powers.
I think of you
Hanging out with your brother.
I think of a man
With pride—I always had
Ultimate respect for him.
I think of him
Going to McDonald's
& Shan's Foods
On payday mornings
Which leaves us mourning.

The Delmar Creative Writing Group

THANK YOU!

Dialogue & Questions

For more information or to receive these materials, reach out to me at

sskovensky@csb.org